

Ref #	Hits	Search Query	DBS	Default Operator	Plurals	Time Stamp
L1	14	((Internet online "on-line" (world ADJ2 Web) website (web ADJ (page\$1 site\$1))) WITH market\$5 WITH logistic\$2) 1 AND (@ad<"20000131" @rlad<"20000131")	US-PGPUB; USPAT	OR	OFF	2004/03/18 23:24
L2	6		US-PGPUB; USPAT	OR	OFF	2004/03/18 23:31
L3	503	((Internet online "on-line" (world ADJ2 Web) website (web ADJ (page\$1 site\$1))) WITH market\$5 WITH services) AND (@ad<"20000131" @rlad<"20000131")	US-PGPUB; USPAT	OR	OFF	2004/03/18 23:25
L4	1330	((Internet online "on-line" (world ADJ2 Web) website (web ADJ (page\$1 site\$1))) WITH market\$5 WITH services)	US-PGPUB; USPAT	OR	OFF	2004/03/18 23:30
L5	0	4 SAME (industrial ADJ equipment) SAME logistic\$2	US-PGPUB; USPAT	OR	OFF	2004/03/18 23:32
L8	5	4 SAME ((industrial ADJ equipment) logistic\$2)	US-PGPUB; USPAT	OR	OFF	2004/03/18 23:28
L9	148	((Internet online "on-line" (world ADJ2 Web) website (web ADJ (page\$1 site\$1))) WITH market\$5 WITH (business NEAR2 services))	US-PGPUB; USPAT	OR	OFF	2004/03/18 23:39
L10	48	9 AND (@ad<"20000131" @rlad<"20000131")	US-PGPUB; USPAT	OR	OFF	2004/03/18 23:44
L11	0	10 AND ((industrial ADJ equipment) logistic\$2)	US-PGPUB; USPAT	OR	OFF	2004/03/18 23:43
L12	910	((Internet online "on-line" (world ADJ2 Web) website (web ADJ (page\$1 site\$1))) SAME market\$5 SAME (business B2B BTB) SAME services)	US-PGPUB; USPAT	OR	OFF	2004/03/18 23:42
L13	16	12 SAME ((industrial ADJ equipment) logistic\$2)	US-PGPUB; USPAT	OR	OFF	2004/03/18 23:43
L14	6	13 AND (@ad<"20000131" @rlad<"20000131")	US-PGPUB; USPAT	OR	OFF	2004/03/18 23:46
L15	10	13 NOT 14	US-PGPUB; USPAT	OR	OFF	2004/03/18 23:47

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Thomas Publishing

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**ABSTRACT:** Thomas Publishing Co. was the creation of one man, Harvey Mark Thomas. His first directory, Thomas' Wholesale, Grocery, Provision, Producers and Kindred Traders Reference Book, published in 1898, still exists, but under a newer name - Thomas Food Industry Register - in print and now on CD-ROM, in professional online databanks, and on the Web. The company's flagship product, Thomas Register of American Manufacturers, did not appear until 7 years later. The family-owned and managed firm has built a publishing conglomerate focused almost exclusively on providing industry with up-to-date product information. Thomas relies heavily on user feedback in its product development, which is often an interactive, multi-step process. Thomas Publishing engages in electronic commerce as a vendor and facilitates electronic commerce for its advertising clients.

**TEXT: Headnote:**

This 'old-line' publisher is leading industry into the emerging electronic marketplace

The familiar green, red, blue, and yellow bindings of the complete 34 volume set of Thomas Register of American Manufacturers are a standby on the shelves of business libraries and purchasing agents. For the past 100 years, the publisher of this comprehensive directory, Thomas Publishing Company, has focused on providing up-to-date information that connects industrial buyers and sellers. With the emergence of the Internet as an important venue for business information and communications, Thomas is leveraging its commanding presence in industry to provide a full-range of electronic commerce tools that, in effect, transform the company from an information and advertising resource to a fully-functioning marketplace for \*industrial\* products and \*services\*.

'Old-line' publisher

Founded in 1898, the same year as Goodyear, Union Carbide, Whirlpool, Pepsi Cola, and Nabisco, Thomas Publishing Company's products and services are essential tools in the over \$400 billion U.S. corporate purchasing market. The company does not publish its revenues. However, Crain's New York Business estimates 1997 revenues at \$200 million.

Like many of the other companies founded near the turn of the century, Thomas Publishing Company (<http://www.thomas publishing.com>) was the creation of one man, Harvey Mark Thomas. His first directory, Thomas' Wholesale, Grocery, Provision, Producers and Kindred Traders Reference Book, published in 1898, still exists, but under a newer name - Thomas Food Industry Register - in print and now on CDROM, in professional online databanks, and on the Web (<http://www.tfir.com>). The company's flagship product, Thomas Register of American Manufacturers (<http://www.thomasregister.com>), did not appear until seven years later.

The family-owned and managed firm has built a publishing conglomerate focused almost exclusively on providing industry with up-to-date product information. It now produces 24 major buying guides, 29 product news magazines, another magazine on factory automation, two product information exchange services, and other marketing services that capitalize on its know-how and databases.

Titles from Thomas Publishing range from American Export Products to Inbound Logistics and Managing Automation Literature Review. The company publishes industrial products directories that cover foreign markets in several languages, and in March of this year became the first to publish a multi-lingual CD-ROM and Internet site, the American Export Register

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(<http://www.aernet.com>).

Because of the economics of its advertiser-supported business, the Internet appears to be an ideal distribution tool for Thomas Publishing. The company now operates more than a dozen distinct Web sites, each catering to a separate market niche. For users-buyers and sellers-Thomas Publishing's many Web sites are, in effect, specialized entry points to one coordinated set of information, products, and services. Many of these sites are accessible through Thomas Publishing's home page.

The company provides custom and multi-client research on industrial and commercial topics, geared at such typical marketing quests such as establishing valid goals, identifying new markets, assessing competitors, designing products, determining and measuring market segments and strategies. This research is conducted by Thomas Marketing Information Center. The company also markets its business lists and provides a comprehensive set of services to direct marketers through its Thomas Business List unit.

In addition to specializing in industrial manufacturing products and processes, Thomas Publishing has developed specialties in two service industries: food, its original specialty, and travel/transportation. Over the past decade, Thomas Publishing Company has made considerable investments in new information media, from fax-on-demand to Web publishing.

The company was in the news in February 1998, when Thomas Regional Directory Company, the unit that produces guides to 19 key industrial markets throughout the U.S., settled a copyright infringement lawsuit it had brought against the former owners of IndustryNet. This milestone case reinforced copyright protection by acknowledging that the guides were "a creative and original work of authorship." More than \$13 billion of products and services were purchased through these guides alone in 1997.

Alliances begun in 1995 have opened up new markets for Thomas Publishing, among engineers, architects, corporate end-users, and information technology professionals and extended the company's capabilities in electronic commerce.

#### Entry into cyberspace

Thomas Register on the Internet (<http://www.thomasregister.com>) has undergone several redesigns since it first appeared on the Net in 1995. "The first site was just a test, a bare bones database," according to Julianne Garry, director of Internet Marketing for Thomas Publishing. "The company just wanted to know the technology was there," she said. It was not promoted to the public.

"The company is very entrepreneurial," she added. "It will test things but doesn't put a lot of money into them until it sees a demand."

The company soon realized that Thomas Register on the Internet could actually be an additional product, so a decision was made to invest in a redesign.

Manufacturers were interested in Internet distribution at the outset, but once they saw how many resources Thomas Publishing was investing, Garry said, "there were huge numbers of new advertisers and increased advertising budgets."

#### Newly designed site

The last enhancement in December 1997 brought Thomas Register on the Internet closer in look and feel to the Register's print edition, with its familiar color scheme and graphics style, to take advantage of its powerful brand image, a factor Garry says is very important in Internet marketing. But the real accomplishment was a dramatic improvement in searching speed, access to comparative listings, and ease of use. Search results are displayed in a grid summarizing the hits and linking directly to additional company information, catalogs, free literature via fax, electronic commerce

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capabilities, and company Web sites.

The newly redesigned Web site also allows users to access more information about Thomas Publishing through new sections for press releases, Frequently Asked Questions, and provides e-mail access to company personnel.

(Photograph Omitted)

The Web site offers brief company descriptions, while the CD-ROM, print, and other online versions offer more extensive profiles, including officer names and asset ratings.

There is no charge for use of Thomas Register on the Internet, but users must first complete a brief registration form. Membership in Thomas Register on the Internet allows users to access many of the other Web sites operated by units of Thomas Publishing.

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In December 1997, Business Marketing magazine named the redesigned Thomas Register Web site as one of the best \*business\*-to-\*business\* Web \*services\*, citing it as "the most customer-friendly" of its NetMarketing 200 sites and including it in its "Best of the Best" category.

The site currently has over 820,000 registered users from over 75 countries spanning all continents and as far away as the Philippines, Indonesia, South Africa, Peru, Kuwait and Russia. Some 63 percent of the users are from the U.S.

Customer service is a hallmark of Thomas Publishing's products, and the Thomas Register Web site is no exception. A free service allows the user to click on a "Can't find it" button and receive e-mail help from a live researcher, who will respond with suggestions, even if they are not listed in the Register. The print volumes offer an 800 number that handles this function.

The company is aggressively promoting the site with an ad campaign launched last June that demonstrates how easy it is to search even for unusual industrial products. These banner ads may be seen on major business, financial, and search sites.

Thomas Register on the Internet is linked as a "topic specific" site on the Netscape Net Search page (<http://www.netscape.com/escapes/search/>) and is thus well positioned to benefit from the traffic Netscape generates as a home page for millions of Web users. Thomas Register is also available in the Resource Library of Entrepreneur Magazine Web site (<http://www.entrepreneurmag.com>).

#### Product development

Thomas relies heavily on user feedback in its product development, which is often an interactive, multi-step process. "Product development and marketing go hand in hand," according to Garry. Thomas has seen significant increases in the numbers of transactions since the redesign.

"Whenever you make it easy for people," she says, "they'll use it more."

#### Net makes sense

Thomas' publications are advertiserdriven, Garry states. At \$240 for the print or the CD-ROM version, subscriber charges just cover the costs of production and distribution. Advertising revenues make the low subscription prices possible.

With the Internet, Garry says, it is the user who pays the distribution costs-not to the publisher in the form of subscription fees but to the ISP for Internet access. An average year's Internet access, Garry points out, adds up to about the annual cost of either the print or CD-ROM version of the Thomas Register of American Manufacturers. Free distribution of Thomas Publishing's databases on the Web is a form of "controlled circulation" that benefits print advertisers.

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Basic listings on Thomas Register's Internet site are free to all qualifying companies. The application form is provided online, but all applications are subject to a review process.

Companies must pay for upgrades, such as making their catalogs available, offering literature by fax, providing direct e-mail links, and links to a company Web site. Companies that purchase ads on Thomas print or CD-ROM directories appear in boldface on the Web site.

Users are a prime business-to-business group, Garry states. Focus groups and other research indicate that this group does not want news, chat rooms, or bulletin boards. They tell Thomas, "I want to get in, find what I want, and get out."

"That is always an interesting challenge for us," says Garry, referring to the conventional wisdom that Internet users are said to want community. "Our sense of community is really how we as a site can relate to our users, instead of users relating to other users."

#### Migration from print

"Like all companies, we have definitely experienced a shift away from print," Carry said. Obviously, with 800,000 registered users compared with 80,000 print and CD-ROM subscribers, she said, Thomas Register has picked up a huge additional audience. Only 10 percent of the print subscribers are registered on the Net, indicating that a large group still prefers using the print volumes.

In terms of ad volume, the Internet has grown as well. In fact, some companies want their materials to appear only on the Internet, Garry said. Advertisers really like the direct response aspect of the Internet. "We can tell advertisers exactly how people found them-through which product heading, company listing, e-mail, or online catalog." Advertisers receive regular traffic reports. The larger distribution channel and the accurate feedback provided by the Internet actually improves the quality of advertising in Thomas' products, Garry stated. However, Thomas has to remain flexible to meet the needs of its varied users. Some manufacturers rely on Thomas Register as their sole marketing vehicle, according to Garry.

#### Web hosting

Thomas has leveraged its position as a leading industrial publisher and its advertising business into the new and potentially explosive business of getting industrial companies onto the Net. Its Internet advertising program incorporates building Web sites, providing direct URL addresses, e-mail, online catalog construction, and more.

Industrial companies, many of which are small, can thus get Internet hosting services from a familiar and trusted resource and get the valuable links to sourcing databases and advertising as an added benefit. Web hosting services were offered as a free incentive to companies advertising in the print version. By the end of 1996, over 2,000 companies had come onto the Web with support from Thomas. The company is now also in the business of developing fax-on-demand catalog distribution centers.

#### Electronic commerce

Thomas Publishing engages in electronic commerce as a vendor and facilitates electronic commerce for its advertising clients. Users may order Thomas's own print and CD-ROM products via the Web, sometimes at discounts for electronic orders.

The company's primary vehicle for electronic commerce currently is TPN (Trading Process Network), a joint venture with GE Information Services. TPN has a private side, where subscribers can make negotiated deals with their choice of suppliers, and a public side which appears on Thomas Register on the Internet.

In announcing the joint venture last February, Jose Andrade, chairman of Thomas Publishing's board, described the goal of the new service as

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bringing together buyers and sellers with "end-toend" electronic marketplace services. The functions of ConnectsUs, Thomas's online sourcing and purchasing EDI application that was introduced at the end of 1995, were folded into the new TPN venture, which is operated over GE Information Services network.

One of the choices on the Thomas Register Web site is to purchase line items through the TPN Register. Companies that choose to make e-commerce available are indicated in a special search results column.

Thomas Publishing's electronic guide and trading services increase the speed with which information is gathered and transactions can proceed. TPN Register claims it can cut procurement time in half and procurement costs by almost one-third.

Recent studies affirm that time is increasingly of the essence in both buying and selling \*industrial\* goods and \*services\*. A study conducted by Opinion Research Corporation for Thomas Register found that suppliers generally have only two days to respond with price bids. Another by Deloitte & Touche (<http://www.us.deloitte.com/>) affirms that in the "virtual" communications era, customers are demanding products and services in "zero time."

TPN Register now also offers Trading Partner Services, professional assistance in helping sellers organize their content and use appropriate classification headings, and buyers to identify suppliers and negotiate contracts.

In entering the field of electronic trade, Thomas Register is not without competitors. Others, including IndustryNet (<http://www.industry.net>), ProcureNet (<http://www.procurenets.com>), and Manufacturing Marketplace (<http://www.manufacturingturing.net>), have also seen the Internet as the ideal procurement and electronic commerce mechanism. Smaller vertical market competitors are also entering the market.

#### Opportunity for growth

With its Internet sites and complementary services, Thomas Register is poised to take advantage of the growing trend toward Internet commerce. And there is plenty of opportunity for growth.

In a survey conducted by Thomas Register and Visa U.S.A. of 2,000 corporate purchase decision makers in a wide range of industries earlier this year, the number of companies relying on the Internet for a majority of their buying is expected to double by the end of the year.

About 10 percent of those surveyed already were using the Internet for the majority of their purchasing. That number is expected to rise to 21 percent by the end of 1998, the survey found. Forty percent of the respondents now use the Internet daily to make purchases. Security was cited by most of the others as the primary barriers to more Internet trade.

A 1997 study by Forrester Research projects a dramatic rise in business-to-business electronic commerce, with \$66 billion in trade and 33 percent of businesses (compared with 4 percent now) using the Internet by 2000.

Thomas Publishing is beginning to gear up for increased transactional traffic. For instance:

By June 1998, the commerce systems will have been redesigned to make them more intuitive and more secure. By July, Thomas will be piloting a corporate extranet at GE, incorporating access to a private area for communications with vendors the company has selected as well as access to the full complement of Thomas electronic vendors. By the end of the summer, this new product, now code-named TRX, will be marketed to Fortune 500 companies.

By the fall, Thomas will be adding CAD drawings like those on its CD-ROMs to the Web site.

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Julianne Garry foresees growth and improvements occurring in the field of electronic commerce at large. There will be even more catalogs, and users will be able to make purchases at any point in their visits to services, not just from a shopping area, she expects. They will be able to look at products from all angles. And customer service will be critical.

Technology has changed the way Thomas accomplishes its mission. But, remarkably, the company has been able to exploit all the latest opportunities in electronic publishing and electronic marketing without straying far from its original mission-and even perhaps coming closer than anyone might have imagined to its founder's vision of providing \*links\* between \*buyers\* and \*sellers\*.

Sidebar:

Stepping stones on the road to Electronic Commerce

1984 Thomas Register is published electronically as File 535 on Dialog.

1986 -Thomas' materials available on consumer-oriented \*online\* services through third-party \*vendors\*.

1990-Thomas \*Register\* information is available by fax-on-demand, an early application of fax database searching techniques

1992 -Thomas Food Industry Register, still a separate publication, is added to Thomas Register Online on Dialog.

1995 -Contents of Thomas Register of American Manufacturers database available on Web site. Advertiser catalogs and fax-on-demand are added to the Thomas Register CD-ROM. Thomas establishes ConnectsUs, an EDI procurement system.

1996 -Thomas Regional Electronic Network Directory (TREND Online), a collection of regional supplier directories, is available on the Internet (<http://trendonline.com>).

1997 - Advertiser-supplied catalogs and literature available by fax-on-demand from the Thomas Register Web site. TPN Register, a GE5Thomas joint venture, provides worldwide procurement services via the Web

Sidebar:

Selected Thomas Web sites and online services

Free-to-the-User Web Sites

Thomas Register of American Manufacturers (<http://www.thomasregister.com>), Covers 155,000 manufacturers, 60,000 product heading categories and 5,500 online supplier catalogs. Provides users with search capabilities, links to manufacturer Web sites, electronic commerce, and fax-on-demand.

Product News Network (<http://productnews.com>) Helps users find products with only knowledge of the desired attributes of the product. Provides information on more than 50,000 industrial products, with frequent updates and an emphasis on new product introductions. Incorporates ante-mail update notification service that can be customized to a user's interests.

American Export Register (<http://www.aernet.com>). In March 1998, the American Export Group of Thomas' International Division launched this multi-lingual directory on CD- ROM and on the Internet. It allows international users to learn about products available for export from 44,000 U.S. companies in any of six languages (English, French, German, Italian, Spanish, and Portuguese).

Thomas Food Industry Register (<http://www.tfr.com>). Covers 30,000 companies and 6,000 product categories in the food industry.

Thomas Regional Directory (TREND Online) (<http://www.thomasregional.com> or <http://www.trendonline.com>). Includes 480,000 industrial distributors,

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manufacturers, and service companies, and 4,500 product and service categories in 19 U.S. industrial markets. Thomas Regional has also added information about trade shows and professional organizations, making it a comprehensive source of industrial information for its users.

Thomas Register of European Manufacturers (<http://www.tipcoeurope.com>). Covers 130,000 European manufacturers in 10,000 product categories.

Managing Automation (<http://www.managingautomation.com>). Web site of Thomas Publishing's magazine devoted to integrated manufacturing which provides up-to-date news, selected articles, and links to other industry resources.

VacationPackager (<http://www.vacationpackager.com>). Comprehensive, interactive online guide to tour operators and vacation packages. based on Thomas' semi-annual print Official Tour Directory. Includes travel tips, toll-free numbers, tourism office listings. Fee-Based or Subscription Services

Thomas Register on Dialog File 535 Includes Thomas Food Industry Register, but not the advertiser-provided catalogs that appear in the print volumes, on the Web and on the CD-ROM. Includes SIC Codes. Thomas Register data available on Dialog may be manipulated in many more ways than the data on the Web site.

TPN Register (<http://www.tpnregister.com>). Washington, D.C. based joint venture between Thomas Publishing Company and GE Information Services that provides Internet-based procurement \*services\* for \*industrial\* material. Blending GE's Trading Process Network with Thomas' Connects Us, the system uses Thomas Register's classification system to allow RFPs to be posted and bids to be submitted privately.

SoluSource (<http://www.solusource.com>). Now under development in a preview phase, a service geared for engineers that provides alternative solutions to engineering challenges and conceives new applications for existing products based on a combination of indexing, intelligent searching, and artificial intelligence.

#### Sidebar:

##### Recent Thomas Publishing alliances

The company has formed alliances with others to acquire new technological capabilities, databases, and access to new customer groups.

Dataware Technologies. In 1995, Thomas Register partnered with Dataware Technologies to produce a CD-ROM version of Thomas Register with online and modem links. Users could then go beyond the contents of the CD-ROM to request fax-on-demand catalogs and updated materials, get technical assistance on searching questions, or order other Thomas Publishing products.

Autodesk Data Publishing. A relationship with ADP began in early 1996, when Thomas Register Publishing made its Thomas Register database available online to Autodesk's three million users. Later, in 1997, it bought three CD-ROM titles from AutoDesk and published them in 1998; PartSpec contains 500,000 pre-drawn parts from more than 100 leading manufacturers in DWG format; PlantSpec provides 50,000 drawings from 20 process and power manufacturers; CAD Blocks contains pre-drawn building products and technical data for architects and engineers. Design professionals copy and paste these drawings into their own applications, thus saving considerable time and improving accuracy.

GE Information Services. Thomas Publishing entered into a new venture with GE Information Services. Thomas Publishing entered into a new venture with GE Information Services in early 1997 to develop an Internet-based procurement service, TPN Register.

EBSCO Publishing. Late in 1997, Thomas Register agreed to link its database to the Collectanea Corporate DeskTop Library, a product of EBSCO Publishing and its Information Services Group, which makes thousands of full-text

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articles and services available to corporate end users via the Internet or IntraNets.

Advanced Marketing Research. In late 1997, Managing Automation Software Guides (MASG), a unit of Thomas Publishing Comfy, for:dE aS partnership with Boston-based Advanced Manufacturing Research (AMR) to produce a Software Evaluation Resources Iit, a set of analytical and electronic tools that assist software decision makers in identifying, selecting, and phasing software that meets their needs.

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